

Overview

Anyone who has stayed on site as a visitor for a considerable amount of time knows that it is rather unpleasant, especially without a car. Based on experience at other labs, it doesn't have to be this way. There are many things which could significantly improve visitor's experience at BNL, some of them so easy and cheap that it would be silly not to do them and others which might take more time, effort, and money. The current state of things probably overall decreases the productivity of scientific visits. Moreover, since this is a lab with international users, most of whom primarily experience the US by visiting Brookhaven, the fact that BNL is such an awful place to visit for long amounts of time reflects poorly not only on BNL but on the scientific establishment in the US and the entire country. We have a responsibility to improve visitor's experiences at BNL

1. Advertising services and organizing visits – There are many services which exist for visitors at BNL but which are not properly advertised and are therefore under used.
2. Dorm issues – Most visitors stay in the dorms and these are in a rather poor state.
 - 2.1. Kitchens – Kitchens, while they exist, are so under stocked as to be almost useless.
 - 2.2. Availability – At times dorm availability is so low that it threatens scientific productivity.
 - 2.3. Maintenance – Maintenance funds are currently spent without user input and therefore do not go to the things which users would most appreciate. Also, long term plans for building upgrades are needed.
 - 2.4. Ethernet Cables/ Wireless – Distributing ethernet cables to guests by default and/or adding wireless to the dorms would help immensely.
3. Shopping shuttle – Small changes in the route of the shopping shuttle would make it significantly more helpful.
4. Ronkonkoma shuttle – Small changes in the schedule of the Ronkonkoma shuttle would make it significantly more usable.
5. BERA store/ store on site – Better advertisement and a wider product line in the BERA store would increase use and make it significantly more useful.
6. Brookhaven Center – Improvements in the service and the menu and addition of a path from the dorms to the Brookhaven Center combined with an advertising push to negate the bad reputation of the Brookhaven Center among users could make this facility much more pleasant and increase its use.
7. Bike availability/ storage on site – Improvements in advertising the bikes available for users perhaps combined with space for users to store their own bikes would be immensely helpful.
8. The on-site shuttle – Addition of hours, particularly to make the shuttle available at shift changes during runs would help immensely.
9. Change machines – With all of the vending machines, there should be a change machine on site somewhere.
10. Instructions on vending machines – The sandwich vending machines need

instructions.

1 Advertising services and organizing visits

There are several services which are not used by visitors in great part because most visitors don't know they exist or don't know how to use them; for example, the shopping shuttle, the Ronkonkoma shuttle, the BERA store, and bikes available for users. Improved advertising of existing services would really help.

First of all, binder containing information on services kept in each dorm room, similar to those found in hotels. Currently, there is a folder with random papers jammed into it, but much of the information is not actually of interest to most people (ie, information on Lyme disease and fire safety rules).

Second, a useful web page would solve most advertising issues and simultaneously solve the User's Center's problem that many users don't tell them when they visit so they have no idea how much time users spend at BNL. A central web page where the first page asked you what dates you were visiting and gave you a list of options for what you needed to arrange for your trip (housing, shuttle from Ronkonkoma, bike rental, etc.) and then it walked you through each of the things you wanted to arrange for your visit would be so much more useful than what exists now. An option to list concerts and events at BNL while the user is there would also help; there are a lot of things going on which most short term visitors never attend because they quite simply don't know about them.

2 Dorm issues

2.1 Kitchens

The dorms were built with kitchens but they need to be equipped in order to be useful.

2.1.1 Dishes – It would be really cheap to buy plates and silverware for each of the kitchens. It is currently very difficult to use the kitchens for meals because there are no dishes which one can eat off of. (Although someone thought to buy pots and pans...)

2.1.2 A full sized refridgerator – for longer stays, such as those typical during shifts, it is very difficult to fit all of the food one needs for a week in a mini-fridge. If one doesn't have a car on site and must use the shopping shuttle, it's actually quite difficult to follow BNL rules about not having food in the room outside of the fridge and have enough to eat, especially for those working the night shift. It is also impossible to fit some things, such as ice cream, in the little mini-freezer and the freezer doesn't actually stay cold enough for meats. A single full sized fridge in one of the two kitchens in each dorm would help immensely.

People would, of course, occasionally leave food and it would create more work for the cleaning staff. Much of this could be solved by posted rules stating that all food must be labeled with a name and a

date and any food older than two weeks will be thrown out. Masking tape and a permanent marker can be kept next to the fridge. It would be worth it for the improved living standard.

- 2.1.3 Ovens – There are currently no ovens in the dorms. This really limits the food one can cook in the kitchens to pasta and stir fry. It wouldn't be necessary to have an oven in both kitchens, but an oven in one of the kitchens would be really useful.

2.2 Availability

Particularly in the summer there are problems with the availability of women's dorms, although there are often problems with the availability of dorms during meetings. In the short term, it seems rather silly for women to have trouble getting dorm rooms when there are rooms in men's dorms and even empty men's dorms. The segregation of men and women seems silly, since we are all adults. It makes sense to keep hallways segregated because there is only one bathroom per hallway, but it seems hard to justify turning women away when there are empty dorms. In the long term, it will probably be necessary to build more dorms.

- 2.3 Maintenance – Currently major maintenance to the dorms is done without significant input from those who actually stay in the dorm, with the result that significant improvements go unnoticed by users and the dorms seem unmaintained to users. For instance, the curtains and rugs in the lounge in Curie were recently replaced and nobody noticed, however, everyone notices the hard water stains in the toilets, sinks, and showers in the bathrooms. A good first step would be regular cleaning of the bathrooms with a cleaner to clean hard water stains, such as CLR.

It would also be wise to survey users about what they think needs to be done in the dorms before major maintenance projects, perhaps with some prodding and some help from the UEC. Users regularly complain to each other about the stains in the bathrooms, the heating, and the beds but these complaints don't seem to have reached those making decisions on maintenance.

- 2.4 Ethernet cables and wireless – One of the standing irritations of visitors is the lack of ethernet cables in the dorms. It may be possible to borrow one from some office but if that's true it's not well advertised. It would be better to have ethernet cables distributed by default. They could either be left in the room (perhaps with the room number written on them so they're hard to mistake for personal property) or be distributed at check in. If the cable disappears, the person can be charged for it. However, as most people don't travel with ethernet cables, it would help immensely.

Also, the dorms could be outfitted with wireless cheaply. Currently the lobbies are but the rooms aren't. This is one of those things which will probably be done eventually anyways so why not now?

- 3 Shopping shuttle – The shopping shuttle currently suffers from lack of advertising. Additionally, some of the advertisements were confusing; posters in Curie made it sound like the shuttle left at 8 AM on Saturday

and picked people up at noon, rather than running a loop from the dorms to the store between 8 AM and noon. Also, currently the shuttle only goes to one grocery store but apparently there is a store with a wider selection across the street from that store. Changing the route to include that store would make it much more helpful.

- 4 Ronkonkoma shuttle – This is so close to being incredibly useful.

Right now, you can catch the shuttle to Ronkonkoma in the mornings and from Ronkonkoma in the evenings but the timing is really bad. In the morning the shuttle arrives at 9 AM to get people from the 9 AM train from NYC, but the train from Ronkonkoma to NYC leaves at either 8:30 or 9:30. The train from NYC in the evening arrives at 5:12 but the shuttle is gone by then. This service could be much more helpful if, by appointment at least 24 hours in advance, the shuttle would leave BNL in time for people to catch the 8:30 train from Ronkonkoma or stay in the evening to get people on the 5:12 from NYC.

Additionally, adding service one day each weekend (probably Saturdays) so that people staying on site could go in to NYC would be helpful. This would be most useful during runs when there are more people on site.

It would also be nice if there could be shuttle service to BNL (at more times than the Ronkonkoma shuttle), at least from JFK and/or the airport on LI. It would also be nice to have shuttles to and from the ferries, perhaps at least during meetings and conferences. It wouldn't necessarily have to be free - people would be willing to pay for this and it could be more affordable than a taxi, which is often the only alternative. But having something available, even at a price, would be a major improvement. Given that most scientists are on a budget and are cheapskates, if there were an option cheaper than a taxi or renting a car, it would be used.

- 5 BERA store/ store on site – The BERA store suffers from lack of advertising. This would be used so much more often if people knew it were there. Even though everyone goes to Berkner hall, it's in a position that's easy to miss and the items most visitors might buy – toiletries – aren't visible from the window. However, if the store expanded its line to include some basic non-perishable food products, such as salt, cereal, and ramen noodles, people would buy those things. If the demand were enough, it could also sell basic perishables such as milk and eggs and perhaps lengthen its hours, at least during runs when there are more visitors on site. This would solve a major problem for people arriving on site for shifts and having no chance to go to a store.
- 6 Brookhaven Center – The Brookhaven Center has suffered under its own poor management. Now it has a reputation for bad service, a bad environment, and bad food. It is really a shame that this service isn't used much. It should be improved so that it is usable.

The Brookhaven Center has long had a reputation for closing or stopping food service whenever the employees felt like no longer serving food. These problems can be stopped by posting a sign on the door giving a number to call if the center is closed during its posted hours and posting something similar inside if food service has stopped before closing hours.

Right now, people quite simply don't know who to complain to. Perhaps free meals could be offered if these conditions aren't met.

The Brookhaven Center also serves both food and beverages which are not comparable in quality to those available off-site. Perhaps Nayersons could work with the UEC to develop a menu more appealing to guests. This could include healthier selections, a wider range of flavors, and some higher quality beers.

If there are improvements to the Brookhaven Center, this would need to be followed by a PR push to convince users to actually use the facility again.

- 7 Bike availability/ storage on site – Rumor has it that bikes exist for users to either rent or borrow and I believe I have even seen them. Where on earth these bikes are or how someone uses them is a mystery to me and most users. This service needs to be advertised better. Bikes available for users should come equipped with lights and helmets.

It would also be nice to have a place on site to get a replacement bike tube and fill tires with air.

If possible a site indoors where users could store their own bikes would be nice. Many users have brought or bought bikes and left them here, but they've been left outside to rust until they're unusable.

It is in general in the interest of BNL to make bikes more readily available on site both for the comfort of users and to minimize car traffic within BNL. To that end, bike lanes should be added when new roads are built and bike racks should be added to buildings to make it easier to bike on site.

- 8 The on-site shuttle – This is a wonderful, under-used service. There actually has been an effective advertising push for this service. There is one primary problem, however: the shuttle does not run during shift changes at the major experiments. For example, STAR shifts change at 7:30 AM, 4:30 PM, and 12:30 AM. The shuttle runs from 8:30 AM – 4:15 PM. This makes it completely useless for getting to and from shift, in addition to being useless for people working in a building far from the dorms who want to work after 4:15. It would be more useful if the hours could be extended to the full work day. Additionally, it would be nice if the shuttle ran at least during runs during shift changes. This is also a safety issue, as there is little lighting and no path out by the ring.
- 9 Change machines – There are many vending services on site but no change machine. At least a few people have arrived at BNL late on a Friday or over the weekend with only large bills because they have just flown in from another country. These people had no food and had to live out of vending machines, but had no way of getting the small bills necessary for the vending machines. It is unconscionable that someone would come to this country and have no way of getting a decent meal while on site or even to buy a horrible sandwich out of a vending machine.

There also are laundry machines in the dorms which take only quarters and a vending machine for soap which takes only quarters, but no change machine.

- 10 Instructions on vending machines – The sandwich vending machine here

apparently works differently than those in Europe. There you insert your money, make your selection, and then turn until you get to your sandwich. Here you cannot turn the thing after you've paid. Instructions should be posted on these vending machines.